

I want to go on record as being very much in favor of Net neutrality. As a computer engineer/computer science graduate who makes my living programming web applications, I can say with certainty that allowing the ISPs to create tiered models of services would destroy the ability of myself and others to innovate.

Let me give an example. In the early days of the World Wide Web, the typical content we had was static pages with maybe an image or two. Network performance continued to be upgraded, however, and as that happened new innovators took advantage of the increase in bandwidth to begin making interactive and interesting web pages. These pages became richer and richer, and content became larger and continually more complex and interesting. You began to have web sites in which users could communicate with each other and participate in collaborative projects. As these new innovations occurred, peoples' expectations web applications rose, demand for Internet connectivity increased, more people subscribed to broadband, and this in turn caused ISPs to update their network architectures. Thus a virtuous cycle was created: more bandwidth increased what developers such as myself could create on the Internet, which interested more people, which caused more of them to subscribe to ISPs, which gave the ISPs money to add even more bandwidth, etc.

Now the situation we are looking at is different. Rather than add network capacity to increasingly allow richer content on the web, the ISPs will be able to charge based on different types of media. IPTV, for instance, will require an addition of considerable bandwidth to the Internet in order to have high quality transmissions. However, by abolishing net neutrality, the ISPs will be able to deliver that performance by giving most of the bandwidth to services like IPTV and throttling other forms of traffic. Rather than spend the money we pay as subscribers for things like bandwidth upgrades, they will just reduce some forms of service and pocket the money. That is NOT what we are paying for.

In addition, this will break the virtuous cycle I mentioned above. Because ISPs can throttle a lot of different kinds of web traffic, they will be able to avoid raising bandwidth. And without the extra bandwidth, we as developers won't be able to push new limits with our programs as we have in the past. Continuing to make richer content requires more bandwidth, and our efforts will be starved in that area. In addition, innovative start ups won't have the money to pay for the increased bandwidth they need to compete with big, established sites. Thus, while they may have good ideas, they probably won't catch on because their sites will be made artificially slower by the packet shapers. We need to keep the Internet a level playing field for everyone.

In closing, I would urge you to look at the history of the Internet. Though brief, it has in a short time profoundly changed the way we live our lives, and made possible advances in science only dreamed of in previous decades. During all this time of astounding development, the Internet was neutral. Given how well the Internet, commerce, science, and everything else are performing under the current system, why would we want to change it? Things don't get any better than they are now (unless you stand to profit by charging more for preferred services).